

32 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

earlier/ These three were Gibbon, Thomas
Arnold, and
Macaulay. He adds :

I know that to run down Lord Macaulay is
the fashion
of the day, I have heard some speak against
him who have
a right to speak ; I have heard many more
who have none.
I at least feel that I have none ; I do not see
how any man
can have the right who has not gone
through the same
work through which Macaulay went, or at
least through
some no less thorough work of a kindred sort.
I can see
Macaulay's great and obvious faults as well
as any man ;
I know as well as any man the cautions with
which his
brilliant pictures must be studied ; but I
cannot feel that I
have any right to speak lightly of one to whom
I owe so
much in the matter of actual knowledge, and
to whom I
owe more than to any man as the master of
historical
narrative. Read a page of Macaulay ; scan
well his min-
ute accuracy in every name and phrase and
title ; contrast
his English undefiled with the slipshod jargon
which from
our newspapers has run over into our books ;
dwell on the
style which finds a fitting phrase in our own
tongue to set
forth every thought, the style which never
uses a single
word out of its true and honest meaning ; turn
the pages of
the book in which no man ever read a
sentence a second
time because he failed to catch its meaning
the first time,¹
but in which all of us must have read many
sentences a
second or a twentieth time for the sheer
pleasure of dwell-
ing on the clearness, the combined fulness

and terseness,
on the just relation of every word to every
other, on the
happily chosen epithet, or the sharply
pointed sarcasm.²

Other contemporaries, admitting
Macaulay's power to
tell a story, nevertheless condemned his
style. ' It would
be unfair/ wrote Mill, ' to measure the
worth of any age

¹ Lord Morley remarks of Macaulay : ' He never wrote
an obscure sen-
tence in his life, and this may seem a small merit until we
remember of how
few writers we could say the same/ Critical Miscellanies
2d Ser (1877)
p. 358.

^s E. A. Freeman, *Methods of Historical Study* (1886), pp.
104-6.